

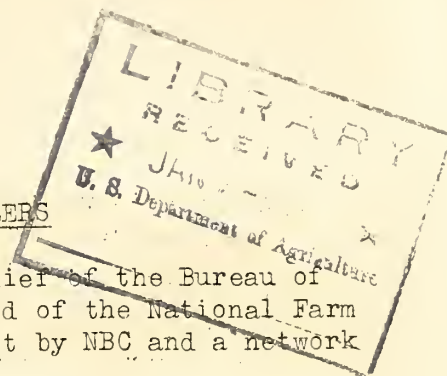
## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



1.4  
C-49 Ea

UNNECESSARY GRADES OF FERTILIZERS



A radio talk by Dr. W. W. Skinner, assistant chief of the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, delivered in the Department period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Monday, December 16, 1935, and broadcast by NBC and a network of 50 associated radio stations.

--ooOoo--

Why do we have so many different grades of fertilizers? That's a question fertilizer makers and users have been asking for a number of years. Some States have more brands of fertilizers than they do counties. Unnecessary brands or grades increase the cost to the farmer.

The American farmer spends a lot of money for fertilizer, and it's generally money well spent when the fertilizers are wisely selected. But we in the chemistry field know from the results of experience and research that the cost of fertilizer to the farmer can be lowered a great deal through the elimination of unnecessary brands or grades.

Fertilizer experts have maintained for years that a dozen or so properly selected grades of fertilizers such as 4-8-4, 2-12-6, and so on, would successfully meet the needs of our fertilizer using territory. For example, the results of a recent survey show that more than a thousand different brands of fertilizers were sold in this country in 1934. And that one-seventh of that was of one grade. Of the 3 and a quarter million tons of fertilizer sold that year nearly 40 percent was of the 5 popular grades. The other 60 odd percent was divided among more than 900 different brands or grades.

Mississippi had 21 grades of fertilizer in 1934. This was the least number of grades in any State in which large quantities of fertilizer were used. Compare that with 425 grades in Florida. Yet 85 percent of the fertilizer sold in Mississippi was of one grade while for each of more than 200 grades in Florida the sale was 25 tons or less per grade.

Why should the farmer insist on reducing the number of grades?

Because it would be money in his pocket in the end. Fertilizer bags and tags have to be printed, chemical analysis made, and storage space provided for each of the 1000 or more grades of fertilizer. And the point to remember is that the cost per grade for many of these items is approximately the same whether 5 or 5 thousand tons are sold. In other words, fertilizer manufacturers could sell their products to farmers for less money and at more profit to themselves if they could make a few instead of many grades or brands.

So the problem then is, What grades should we eliminate?

(over)

And that's where the farmer comes in. Fertilizer manufacturers don't make so many grades because they want to. They do it because they try to satisfy all their customers. So the thing for the farmer to do is to find out if a few well selected grades of fertilizer wouldn't serve his purpose about as well as the many grades offered on nearly any local market. With that information the local fertilizer manufacturer could produce tonnage instead of brands or grades, to the profit of all.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we should do away with all but 2 or 3 grades of fertilizers. Not at all. It simply means that fertilizer manufacturers are compelled by competition and the force of other circumstances in most of the States to make and to stock large numbers of brands, many of which they sell in small quantities and which are essentially the same as other brands or grades sold in large quantities. And the consumer, the farmer, pays the cost.

In order to try to solve this problem the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, cooperating with the National Fertilizer Association, made a survey to get the information needed to serve as a basis for reducing the number of grades of fertilizers wherever this should be done.

The report of that survey has been printed and is available as long as the supply lasts. So, if you want to know how many grades of fertilizers are being sold in your State, and how many of those make up the bulk of the fertilizer tonnage, write the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, Washington, D. C., and ask for a copy of the report on PLANT FOOD CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1934.

#####